

Artful Heirlooms

Ruth Monsell

About Ruth Monsell



Maine's only professional silhouette artist, Ruth Monsell is in demand for fairs, fundraisers, weddings, corporate events and at museum and historical society functions. In the past year she has been called upon to create business logos in cut paper, a profile of Ben Franklin for a college banner, and oversized silhouettes for a major movie filmed in New York. She also turned out profiles of passengers aboard three Royal Caribbean cruise ships last year.

She creates three to four inch profiles of subjects from live sittings in less than five minutes, using only scissors. In the late 1970's, working live as a portrait artist at out-

door art shows in Huntington, Long Island, she discovered a complete absence of silhouettists, and began cutting profiles: miniature portraits in cut paper. Often asked who taught her to cut silhouettes, she explains that she is self-taught. As a child she was always drawing, and was often found cutting out paper dolls, snowflakes or angel mobiles.

Until moving to Maine in 2000, she earned her living in corporate telecommunications sales, squeezing in the practice of art only a few times a year. She also spent fifteen years as a teacher of English, from Junior High through college. In Maine, she set up her first home studio and began devoting herself to art. In 2002 she established her business, **Artful Heirlooms**. Today she cuts as many silhouettes from photos as

from life, through her website. In recent years she has added decorative full figure cuttings of people, animals and Maine motifs.

She also annually fulfills a score of portrait commissions in pastel or oil, is a member of the Portrait Society of America, and has studied with Daniel Greene and John Whalley. In 2007, a company in Pennsylvania commissioned her to create forty portraits of famous historical figures, ancient to contemporary. Her portraits range from charcoal and conte head and shoulder renderings to full figure oil paintings, some with elaborate backgrounds or multiple subjects. She strives for portraits that not only achieve an excellent likeness, but capture the spark of the individual's personality and spirit, whether the subject is a baby or a grandparent.



She finds painting children a particular joy, especially capturing candid moments in time of a child's life. Subjects are often painted at play, exploring, resting, or interacting with a parent or pet. She adds, "I love painting subjects outdoors, surrounded by nature and bathed in sunshine. Like the impressionist painters who have always been my inspiration, I find the effects of light and shadow fascinating and moving."

As a silhouettist, she takes great pleasure in helping keep alive a nearly lost art form with a long, illustrious history. Only a handful of artists in the entire U.S. have perfected this demanding art form. "I regularly meet people who say they've been looking for a silhouette artist for years," she commented.

She has found working with Allan McCollum's on *The Shapes Project* stimulating, challenging and fun, and she is thrilled to be a part of her first New York gallery opening.

Visit Ruth's website by going to <http://www.artfulheirlooms.com>